

Running a Book Club: Tips and Tricks

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Outline

- ▶ Book Club Basics
- ▶ Safe Space
- ▶ Answering Why
- ▶ Discussing How
- ▶ Case Study
- ▶ Resources

Book Club Basics

- ▶ What kind of book club?
 - ▶ Academic? Social? Somewhere in between?
- ▶ What book(s)?
 - ▶ Non-fiction? Fiction?
 - ▶ Prose vs Poetry vs Comics
 - ▶ Equally important: who decides?
- ▶ How many members?
 - ▶ ALA suggests between 8 and 16.
 - ▶ I think the sweet spot is more like 4 to 10.

Book Club Basics Continued

- ▶ How often should you meet?
 - ▶ In many ways, this is determined by the purpose of the club
- ▶ Where should you meet?
 - ▶ Somewhere convenient to all members
 - ▶ Ideal is a calm, quiet space, without technological distractions
- ▶ Communication
 - ▶ Email? Social media? Phone?

Meeting Structure

- ▶ Largely determined by style of club, but some basics include...
 - ▶ Have a facilitator, but let everyone else guide the discussion.
 - ▶ There to fill the inevitable awkward silence, keep discussion “on track”, and to ensure **everyone** has a chance to speak
 - ▶ Set ground rules
 - ▶ Will vary, but usually avoid cliquish behavior, say more than “like/dislike”, and discuss how to handle disagreements (they WILL happen!)
 - ▶ Decide how to handle people who haven’t read the book.
 - ▶ Include them, but be explicit about spoilers if there are concerns
 - ▶ Consider if you will be discussion-only, or if there will be games, presentations, hand-outs, etc.

Evaluation

- ▶ Typically not necessary for social book clubs
- ▶ If your club is part of formal education or if you are trying to prove value...
 - ▶ Participant feedback is key
 - ▶ Map themes of text to discussion to learning outcomes
 - ▶ Be mindful of the limitations of self-reporting
 - ▶ Highly recommended reading: *Book club elective to facilitate student learning of the patient experience with chronic disease*. [PMCID: PMC2865403](#)



The First Rule of Book Club
is Don't Talk about Book
Club!

“Why should we do this?”

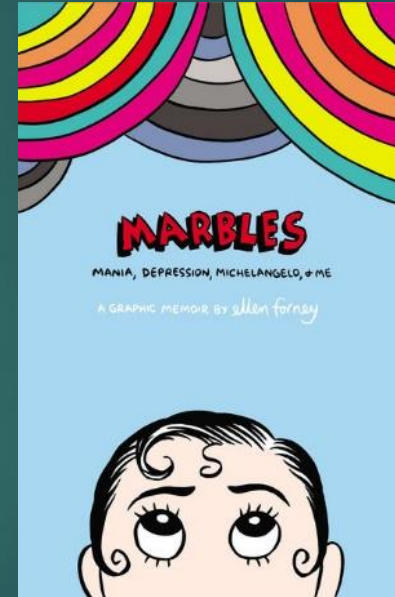
- ▶ Book Clubs support...
 - ▶ Literacy
 - ▶ Empathy Development
 - ▶ The Role of Literature in Society (or Medicine)
 - ▶ Social Engagement
 - ▶ Networking
 - ▶ The Library's Relationship with the Community or Institution
 - ▶ Internal and External Partnerships

“How are we going to do this?”

- ▶ Partners, Partners, Partners!
 - ▶ Internal & External
- ▶ What are institutional goals? How can we map a book club to them?
 - ▶ Ex. Diversity (blanket-term)
- ▶ Structure & Institutional Culture
 - ▶ Lunch and Learns
 - ▶ Formal vs Informal
 - ▶ Interdepartmental vs Intradepartmental
 - ▶ Whole Book vs Sections

Case Study: NNLM NER Reads *Marbles*

- ▶ The NNLM NER staff used our Mental Health Graphic Medicine Book Club Kit
- ▶ Staff had 5 weeks to read the book, though most reported reading it in a few hours.
- ▶ Matthew facilitated, made extensive use of discussion guides supplied with the book*
- ▶ Discussion focused on experience of reading the comic (5 of the 7 were not comics readers)
- ▶ Discussed the role of prior knowledge in the understanding of the text
- ▶ Overall impression: valuable, gave new insight into the experience of bipolar disorder. Comics format well-suited to mental illness.



Helpful Resources

- ▶ ALA Book Discussion Groups LibGuide:
<http://libguides.ala.org/bookdiscussiongroups/Basics>
- ▶ Reading Group Guides: <http://www.readinggroupguides.com/>
- ▶ Book Publishers
 - ▶ For example, Penguin Random House's Book Club site:
<http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/book-clubs/>.
 - ▶ Note that not all publishers provide guides and certainly not for all books. (Guides for comics are virtually non-existent.)

Further Reading

- ▶ It Takes an Academic Village: The Library's Role in Supporting Interprofessional Communication through a Book Club. [DOI: 10.1080/02763869.2017.1259903](https://doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2017.1259903)
- ▶ Book clubs--outreach opportunities for hospital libraries. [DOI: 10.1080/02763869.2014.957096](https://doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2014.957096)
- ▶ Book club elective to facilitate student learning of the patient experience with chronic disease. [PMCID: PMC2865403](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/2865403/)
- ▶ Synoptic philosophy in a neurosurgical residency: a book and cinema club. [DOI: 10.1016/j.wneu.2012.10.069](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wneu.2012.10.069)
- ▶ The bad bugs book club: science, literacy, and engagement. [PMCID: PMC3706141](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/3706141/)
- ▶ Book discussion course: timely topics for medical students. [DOI: 10.1080/02763869.2014.897513](https://doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2014.897513)

Questions?

Request a Graphic Medicine Book Club Kit
at: www.nnlm.gov/ner/kits!

Feel free to contact me any time at:

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